



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Institute for Educational Development, Karachi

Institute for Educational Development

January 1999

The professional development of educational managers in Sindh: Some personal and participants' reflections

Muhammad Memon

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck

Recommended Citation

Memon, M. (1999). The professional development of educational managers in Sindh: Some personal and participants' reflections. *Education 2000*, 31(7), 8-10.

Available at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck/95

LEAD ARTICLE

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGERS IN SINDH: SOME PERSONAL AND PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS

By
Dr. Muhammad Memon, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

The national educational policies have considerably emphasised the professional development of teachers generally and particularly of supervisory and managerial personnel for improving the quality of education in Pakistan. However, the current national education policy 1998-2010 has reiterated the importance of the professional development of the supervisory and managerial personnel in the area of educational management. This seems a positive trend towards developing personnel who are directly responsible for developing effective management system. Like other countries, Pakistan is also undergoing the policy shift towards devolution of powers and responsibilities that might add more pressure and demands on the role of district education officers, headteachers and principals of schools/institutes who are referred as school leaders (see MacBeath, 1998).

The role of school leaders becomes very crucial in making the management reforms successful and sustainable. The school leaders strive for achieving the maximum performance targets of their institutions. Hopkins (1992) mentions that good schools are sailed rather than driven, evoking an image of the yacht being steered from the stern, tacking and changing with a reading of wind and current. In order to make good schools, we need to have good lead-

ers who should seek first to understand before seeking to be understood (Covey, 1994). These leaders should not lead from the apex of the pyramid but from the centre of the web of human relationships (Murphy, 1994). One of the experts in the field of management argues that "in a learning organisation leaders may start by pursuing their own vision, but as they listen carefully to others' vision they begin to see that their own personal vision is part of something larger". (Senge, 1990, p. 352). I agree with Leithwood (1992) that the leaders are in the thick of the action, therefore they need to be exposed to innovative educational management and leadership strategies to develop and strengthen the institutional capacity. Goleman (1996) describes that leaders should have three kinds of networks — expertise, communication and trust that may help in promoting institutional capacity building.

The Social Action Programme is also envisioned to develop institutional capacity building which implies an integrated management approach to educational improvement. In order to strengthen the institutional development capacity of the public and private sector, the Institute of Educational Development (IED) Aga Khan University (AKU), Karachi has developed two professional development programmes for each headteachers and district education officers in Sindh. The one-year field-based modular programme containing ten modules is offered to headteachers called Advanced Diploma in School Management-ADISM (see Memon 1998). Another a ten-week professional development programme is developed for the supervisory and managerial personnel including district education called Certificate in

Educational Management-CEM (see Memon and Reza, 1998). Both programmes are developed in line with the felt needs of the stakeholders. The first programme of professional development of the district education officers and others in the public sector was conducted at IED from March 30-June 5, 1998. This paper describes the details and some personal and participants' reflections on the CEM programme.

CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (CEM) PROGRAMME

The Certificate in Educational Management (CEM) Programme was specially designed for the professional development of the district education officers, principals/vice principals of elementary colleges of education and the principals of higher secondary schools in the public sector to enable them to manage their institutions more effectively after their professional development (see CEM programme handbook). The ultimate purpose of this programme was to develop the professional knowledge, skills and competencies of the above officers enabling them to become 'invitation-al' and 'situational' leaders.

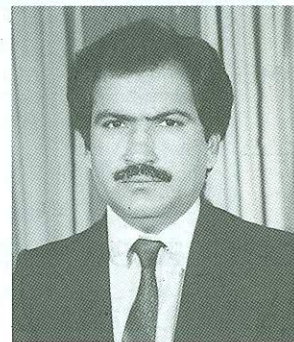
The Education Department, Government of Sindh, nominated candidates for the programme who participated in a written test to assess their written language competence followed by interview conducted by IED tutors. The interview questions were focused on the candidates expectations about the programmes, challenges of their role and strategies to deal with challenges, potential leadership qualities and commitment towards quality improvement etc. Twenty two successful candidates joined the pro-

gramme. The programme aimed to enable the course participants: a) to reconceptualize their role and its related challenges through critical analysis of their existing management and leadership practices and processes in their contexts for enhancing their managerial/leadership skills and competencies; b) to demonstrate understanding of the acquired new educational management and leadership practices and processes required for bringing about improvement in the context of educational management / leadership and supervision; and c) to develop re-entry plan based on their experiential learning in the core area of educational management and supervision in relationship with their role that may contribute towards building personal and institutional capacity.

The programme consisting of the following seven professional development domains was spread over a period of ten weeks. An attempt was made to integrate each area with another in order to maintain coherence throughout the programme. Overall the programme contained 300 contact hours and each day had six contact hours.

Domain One: Reconceptualization of Current Management Practices (30 Contact Hours)

During the reconceptualization process, the participants were encouraged to revisit their existing practices and critically examine them in order to develop enhanced conceptual understanding of their practices. The reconceptualization process helped course participants to revisit their old notions of educational management and supervision practices / processes and explore possible ways and means to depart from



Dr. Muhammad Memon is currently an Associate Professor in the Institute for Educational Development (IED), The Aga Khan University, Karachi. He did his Ph.D. (Education) from the University of Surrey, England.

these practices to new ones. In order to achieve this, a few questions like the ones given below guided them to critically analyse their existing practices.

- Why did I choose to become educational manager/leader?
- What kind of educational manager / leader am I?
- How does my style help in creating friendly relationships with subordinates?
- Who is my favourite educational manager/leader and why?
- Am I the kind of educational manager / leader I want to be?
- What do I believe about my subordinates?
- Who are my favourite subordinates and why?

This domain included critical analysis of the existing scenario of educational management, supervision practices, teaching and learning processes, role of educational managers / leaders and community for the development of education, competing world views on teaching and learning processes, use of critical thinking as a tool for becoming reflective managers and leaders in their own contexts.

Domain Two: Managing Curriculum and Instruction (60 Contact Hours)

Domain two was allocated two weeks. The participants were encouraged to; a) share their concerns and challenges of curriculum and instructional practices and explore ways to overcome them; b) look into different theoretical and practical strategies of curriculum and instruction in order to develop their understanding about curriculum and instruction which have been confusing for the academics and practitioners; c) view the curriculum issue in relation to the practical challenges of education in Pakistan; d) reflect on the ways of turning a centrally-based curriculum into a school focused curriculum; and view themselves not just as curriculum implementers but reflect on the possibilities of redefining their role as curriculum planners, developers, implementers and evaluators in their contexts. The themes included were curriculum and instruction notions, curriculum and instructional theories and models, curriculum development processes in Pakistan and their implications for teaching and learning, process of curriculum renewal, enrichment and

evaluation, relationship between curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, instruction and assessment, role of educational managers, leaders and others in curriculum development.

Domain Three: Managing Education and Supervision (60 Contact Hours)

Domain three was allocated two weeks. The participants were encouraged to critically analyse a scenario of their existing practices of education management and supervision during the two weeks. They were exposed to alternative practices of educational management and supervision required for improving quality of education in Pakistan. A two week input enabled the participants to conceptualise the theoretical and practical issues and challenges of educational management and supervision practices. The topics discussed were educational management and supervision notions, functions of educational management and supervision, school as a social/learning organisation, organisational cultures, educational management and leadership styles, paradigms of educational management and supervision, role of supervision in school, school improvement and effectiveness, staff performance appraisal, practical issues of educational management and supervision, managing teamwork, conflict, stress etc.

Domain Four: Managing Research and Evaluation (60 Contact Hours)

This domain focused on the scope, importance and use of research and evaluation in the educational organisations. The participants were exposed to research and evaluation strategies generally and particularly to an action research enabling them to get hands-on experience for conducting small scale research projects in their contexts. The input was made research and evaluation notions, scope and importance of research and evaluation, types of research and evaluation, action research in classroom, research and evaluation methods/tools, conducting action research/evaluation, report writing.

Domain Five: Education Planning and Development Process (30 Contact Hours)

During this week, an attempt was

made to discuss the macro and micro issues and challenges related to educational planning and development and their implications for the overall development of education. The participants were encouraged to explore alternate ways to improve planning and development process related to quality of education. The themes discussed were educational planning and development notions, functions of educational planning and development, types of educational planning, approaches to educational planning, factors affecting educational planning, process of educational planning and challenges of educational planning in Pakistan.

Domain Six: Understanding Economics of Education (30 Contact Hours)

This domain was focused on understanding economics of education and its implications for educational and economic development of country. The participants were exposed to new strategies for developing cost effective plans that could contribute towards the development of education as a whole. The topics discussed were conceptualising economics of education, Cost-Benefit Analysis in education, educational costs and outputs, private and social rate of return, financing in education, budgeting process, monitoring organisational performance and economic sustainability of the organisation.

Domain Seven: Re-entry in the Field (30 Contact Hours)

During the last three days of the programme, the participants attended a two day seminar on the process of re-entry and its challenges conducted at IED. The seminar was attended by all school stakeholders including practising and potential professional development teachers, headteachers, school managers, district education officers, IED faculty and others. This seminar provided an opportunity to the CEM participants to meet with different stakeholders and to exchange their perspective on the importance and challenges of re-entry. Most of the participants found this opportunity quite useful and relevant to their own context and role. However, one day was allocated for doing the synthesis of their professional learning in order to develop action plans for their own re-entry in the field. These action plans were presented in the class-

room for eliciting feedback for further improvement.

In order to achieve the objectives, a wide variety of instructional approaches were used. The participants were expected to participate actively, hence they must interact with each other by taking turns, helping, sharing and respecting each others' perspectives. They were engaged in the various intellectual and academic/professional discourses / activities with an open, but analytical mind, in a spirit of free, and critical inquiry. The participants' portfolios were maintained which include presentations of debriefing sessions, reflections on classroom presentations and written assignments, critique of case studies etc. They were encouraged to use reflective journals on the regular basis and share with their assigned tutors on a weekly basis. The participants were also expected to offer their critique on the ten selected articles titled 'weekly focused readings' provided by their tutors. In addition, the course participants were also expected to read 'essential and suggested readings' and relate them to their own contexts. Although, the classroom activities were formally assessed for an award of marks or grades, the participants were required to complete four major written assignments in order to get feedback from the tutors for their further professional development. Maintaining reflective journal was the regular feature of programme.

SOME PERSONAL AND PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS

A ten week programme was well received by all participants. One of the participants said "It was very useful programme. All the people working in my organisation should attend this programme for building the institutional capacity of the education department because it is an innovative programme. This programme is different from other programmes since it deals with both management and academic aspects of professional development" (Informal Interview). Another participant said "This programme was very practical, creative and innovative programme. We are taught not to get scared from the problems but we were encouraged to take them as an opportunity and work on them in a collegial atmosphere. We need to create a culture of lead management rather than boss management".

More or less same views were shared by every participant. This programme served as a bridge between the public and private sector to work together to improve the quality of education by developing leadership qualities of the field education officers. Some of the personal and participants' reflections on the programme are given below:

i) Becoming Reflective Managers / Leaders

It was found that most of the participants employed reflective practice as a vehicle of their professional development in order to become reflective managers and leaders. They were able to unpack their old notions of management role, tasks and functions and to develop alternatives to enhance their understanding about their new role as a reflective educational leader for bringing about change in their context of role. It was also found that some of the participants gradually moved from descriptive reflection to analytical and critical level. The evidence of this was visible in their reflective journals. Some thought they had already begun to think critically on various issues. One of them said "I have become self-critical and self-reflective as a result of using reflective practice in my personal and professional life" (Reflective Journal). This was the ultimate purpose of the programme and every body did a good job to improve themselves as reflective leaders.

ii) Becoming Effective Problem Solvers/Decision Makers

During the programme, it was found that the majority of participants learned about problem solving skills that helped them to improve their decision-making process. They also enjoyed how to resolve controversy or conflict in an agreeable way. As one of the participants said "Now I will be facilitator and guide to my staff and teachers. I have learnt how to identify and analyse the problems. After this training I can help my colleagues in solving their problems etc..." Another participant said "...this training helped me how to conceptualise educational problem in the right perspective. Now I am quite confident to solve educational problems with the help of my colleagues (subordinates). I wish I should have learnt such skills and competencies a long time ago to work with my subordinates to resolve problems rather than blaming them..." This seems a good sign

of becoming cognisant of the problems and developing strategies to solve them.

iii) Acquiring Interpersonal Skills

During the programme, a major emphasis was placed on the development of interpersonal skills of the participants so that they are able to work with people effectively. They were exposed to a number of social skills that helped them in their personal and professional development. Also, the programme focused on promoting team work and co-operative learning amongst the participants. Initially, the participants were not comfortable to work in groups, listen to each other, respect others' views or disagree in an agreeable way, but the instructional team worked intensively and their constant encouragement and counselling helped the participants develop social skills which were evident in the process of teaching and learning as the time went by. One participant shared her views that "I was the youngest in the group and did not feel comfortable with senior people initially. But slowly we developed a rapport because most of the time we were required to work in groups. We learned a lot from each other and we shall keep in touch even after the course finishes". The programme also helped them how to make disagreement in an agreeable way so that the superordinates and subordinates should not feel threatened. However, ample opportunities were provided to them to challenge each others' view point and develop a shared understanding of the issues and challenges being faced by them in the context. For example, one participant mentioned that "I did not know how to resolve controversy in an agreeable way. Now, I realise that there is no single way to resolve issues since every body is unique and has own way of seeing things. I wished our officers should have learnt such things in their career so that the controversy of the past should not be there any more ...". This reveals that the participants recognised the importance and implications of the social skills.

iv) Enhancing Understanding about Managerial Role and Perspective

The programme helped the participants in enhancing their understanding about their managerial role, tasks and functions. They were able to see the paradigm shift in their role

from bureaucratic to democratic leader. The participants were exposed to alternative paradigms of education, management, supervision, research and planning. As a result, they were able to understand the underpinning assumptions of the alternative paradigms and their implications for their role. They seemed to be appreciative about their new perspective and role as instructional leaders and clinical supervisors. They were also able to conceive their role in school improvement and effectiveness. The most significant achievement was to witness a change in the beliefs of some of the participants with reference to their roles. They seemed to have moved from 'power culture' to 'task culture'. One of the participants said "I was an autocratic leader. When I look back I feel I was really hard on my teachers. I really regret the way I treated them some times". Another participant commented "IED has changed our beliefs and ways of seeing things. Now, I can see the importance of my role which should be role model for others. My job should not be to direct people and put pressure on them to get things done but to encourage them how to visualise their role and come up with their own plans and solution to their problems. Now, I am able to apply my thinking into action...". Research in the area of educational management suggests that the focal people have to conceive their role, otherwise, they would not be able to work effectively.

v) Understanding the Dynamics of Learning Organisations

The participants were also able to understand the dynamics of school as social and learning organisation, school culture and management of change through developing their skills as researcher/evaluator, strategic and operational planner. One participant reflected in his journal that "Change is not a blue print but it is a process which is very slow. We have to bring about change slowly and gradually for the improvement of education system. Change needs a clear vision and mission; we cannot move without it...". Another participant said "In the past we had a very blurred notion of school, we did not know what was the difference between schooling and education. We thought schools cannot improve. We had no clear concept how to relate people's performance to

organisational goals. We need to improve the performance by bridging the gap between the organisational and people's needs. This will gear towards the effectiveness and efficiency...". This indicates that the participants have developed their understanding about effective organisations etc.

vi) Becoming aware of the Dynamics of School Improvement

The participants were exposed to several models of school improvement. They were also provided with opportunity to visit school improvement programmes in public and private sectors and meet with people and learn from their practical knowledge and experiences about successful schools. They were engaged in dealing with school improvement tasks, develop and critically analyse their school improvement plans. Thus, every participant came with different plans and demonstrated their understanding how to prepare school improvement plans and how to cope with its challenges. As one participant said "My senior officers consider me that I am the most knowledgeable officer in the education department...to be frank I would tell them their perceptions were not right. I would also tell them I had lot of misconceptions in my mind about education, but now they can trust me to be an effective and reflective educational leader. I know how to plan things systematically and monitor performance. I know we can't make changes sustainable until we have effective monitoring and evaluation systems." Another participant said "I am no more big monster but a person having a lot of practical wisdom and intelligence. I have understood the notion and process of school improvement which is ongoing. We need to bring about change based on the combination of both process and outcomes. I realise school improvement can't sustain without the support of all stakeholders. Everybody is equally responsible for making change sustainable...". This shows that the participants have developed their understanding of school improvement process and its notion.

vii) Perceiving Role as Change Agents for Quality Improvement

It was interesting to note that during the first two weeks every participant thought they were not sup-

Contd. from P. 10

posed to bring about change in curriculum, instruction, assessment etc., but once they were able to unfreeze their old notions they considered themselves as change agents in the process of improving quality of education in schools. In order to become change agents, they learned how to manage change and generate resources with the help of community etc. They developed action plans for their re-entry to their field work and shared with the instructional team for getting feedback for further improvement.

viii) Improving English Language Proficiency

Since the programme was conducted in English language that helped participants to improve their both written and verbal communicative competence. This was a spin-off of the programme. Most of the participants indicated towards the end of the course that their English language proficiency improved during ten weeks of the programme. However, in the beginning, some of them had a difficulty in communication in English. The faculty encouraged them to participate in the class which slowly resulted into improving their English language communicative skills.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the participants not just enjoyed their programme but also learnt a lot. Despite, the diverse background of participants, they equally benefitted from the programme. Most participants found this programme quite interesting experience to become life long learners. They worked hard to meet the expectations of the programme and sometimes they had to come on weekends to use library and meet their tutors for seeking feedback on their assignments or classroom work etc. They developed good reading habits and also developed academic writing skills. They also developed effective presentation skills. There was also a significant change in the level of their confidence and maturity of the participants. As the time passed they gained a lot of confidence in their presentation of their view points or perspectives. But some of the participants became more confident as the course went on. They started participating more in the

class and exhibited an increased confidence in themselves as individuals. They were quite comfortable with the faculty members as one of them said "Before this I had not been exposed to a learning environment where one could even ask silly questions without feeling embarrassed. A factor which contributed a lot towards the overall success of the course was the organisation and the delivery of the programme. I firmly believe that the training strengthened our teaching skills and broadened the mental horizon..." Another participant said "I gained a lot and the management training gave me more confidence and strength to work more and more...". As one of the participants said that now we are no more officers, we are helpers and enablers in the process of educational development. We need to be proactive and are aware of our role. We must follow those who say leaders make the right decisions for the right reasons." Thus, the majority of the participants considered their professional development programme as remarkable achievement and helped them in developing them as effective and reflective educational leaders. However, in the beginning some participants seemed to have an aggressive attitude and found to be resistant to change their existing

management practices etc, but with the pace of time, they became settled in and started enjoying and questioning their prior knowledge and practices for their professional learning. It is interesting to note that most the course participants were in their early fifties and happened to be the heads of large families, sometime they experienced problems of concentration especially when they had any bad news from their families. For example, during the programme three course participants lost their close relatives which affected their personal as well as professional learning for a while, but due to a caring environment at IED and through adequate moral support, they successfully completed the programme. Nevertheless, a high level of enthusiasm and interest of the participants was found in the programme. Therefore, such programmes should be arranged for working and aspiring educational managers to expose them to the new management knowledge, skills and competence in order to broaden their vision of their role that can help in improving the quality of education through effective supervision. This will help them to learn about their role its challenges which have implications for improving quality of education.

REFERENCES

- Covey S. (1994). The seven habits of highly effective people. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Goleman, H. (1996). Emotional intelligence. London: Bloomsbury.
- Government of Pakistan. (1998). National Education Policy 1998-2010. Islamabad: Ministry of Education.
- Hopkins, D. (1992). Changing school culture through development planning, in S. Riddell and S. Brown (eds.), school effectiveness research: its messages for school improvement, H.M.S.O., Edinburgh.
- Leithwood, K. (1992). The move towards transformational leadership. Educational Leadership, Vol. 49, No. 5, pp. 8-12.
- MacBeath, J. (eds.) (1998). Effective school leadership: responding to change. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.
- Memon, M. (1998). The Future of headteachers as educational leaders in Pakistan: Implications for pedagogical leadership. Education 2000. Vol. 3, No. 3, Oct. 1998.
- Memon, M. and Reza, F. (1998). A follow study of professional development of educational leaders: implications for school improvement. Education 2000. Vol. 3, No. 4, Nov. 1998.
- Murphey, J. (1994). Transformational change and the evolving role of the principals, in J. Murphy and K.S. Louis. (eds.), Reshaping the principalship: insights from transformational reform efforts. Corwin, Newbury Park.
- The Aga Khan University (1998). Handbook for certificate in educational management (CEM) programme for Sindh education department officers. Karachi: Institute for Educational Development.

EDUCATION 2000

ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Particulars		Casual	Contract (Six months)
Full Page	— Colour	Rs. 12,000	Rs. 10,500
Full Page	— B/W	Rs. 6,500	Rs. 6,000
2nd/3rd Cover	— Colour	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 12,500
2nd/3rd Cover	— B/W	Rs. 10,000	Rs. 8,500
Back Cover	— Colour	Rs. 18,000	Rs. 15,000

Note: Advertisers desiring to place their ad insertions on per col. cm. basis may also send their ad materials but such ads (subject to a minimum size of 11 cm. x 2 col.) will be printed in black & white only at Rs. 80 per col. cm. (casual) and Rs. 75 per col. cm. (contract).